

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, ranking members Miner and France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee: My name is Terra Volpe, I am the Director of Community Outreach for CT Against Gun Violence. I am testifying in support of the \$3.6 million included in the Governor's budget adjustment bill for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence prevention programs.

Over the last 3 years I have spent a lot of time listening to community members talk about their experiences living in areas where the threat of daily gun violence is an ongoing real. I have heard the deep concerns of parents about the safety of their children. I have heard the anger, that is rooted in generations of absolute heartbreak, because the epidemic of gun violence has existed in these communities for decades, and not enough gets done about it, especially from the prevention side. I have heard to haunting wails of mothers who have lost children, because of the violence around them. And I have heard the stories of children, in the middle of the night, watching out of their windows as first responders arrive at crime scene to investigate until an ambulance can come to remove the deceased gunshot victim from the concrete and drive them away, leaving the blood stains behind for that child to walk by the next morning. And when the people telling me these stories say that they feel their state and country has forgotten about them, I

believe them. Because what I have come to understand, is when you live in unaddressed daily gun violence, you cannot unsee, unexperience or unfeel the in-action around you.

118 people were murdered by guns in CT cities last year. That is a slow mass shooting. Gun deaths happen in CT at or near this rate in every year. It's time for the slow mass killings of Black, brown and indigenous people to matter to ALL of us.

That is why, although I am grateful for the \$3.5 million in the governor's budget, which would be divided up over two years for multiple cities, I feel strongly that the proposed funding is not enough. The issue of community level gun violence deserves the same action and urgency as the Covid response because it too is a public health crisis.

Additionally, evidence-based gun violence prevention and intervention programs have demonstrated that they do reduce shooting in high-violence areas. Furthermore, in addition to the \$6.3 Billion in ARPA funding that Connecticut received, CT has its own surplus of \$2 Billion.

Beyond the ethical responsibility CT has to those impacted by this issue, Gifford's Law Center tells us that, CT gun violence costs its taxpayer

between \$60-\$90 million dollars annually. Allocating a real investment in prevention upfront, is the ethically and fiscally right thing to do.

I would also like to see funding go toward an Office of Community Gun Violence Prevention, which could not only provide grant funding to community prevention and intervention organizations, but for the first time in CT history, such an office could create a coordinated effort to reduce community gun violence.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to speak.